

P313

FORMAL CAREGIVERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS OLDER PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

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Objectives: Staff positive attitudes towards people with dementia are seen as a facilitator to personalised care and job satisfaction. This study aims to analyse formal caregivers' attitudes towards older people with dementia. Specifically, it aimed to explore how caregivers' socio-demographic data (age, education level, time of working experience, formal training in dementia, subjective health) are related to their attitudes.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted in the centre region of Portugal, with a convenience sample of 180 paid caregivers, who provide direct care to people with dementia in care homes and/or day centres. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and the Portuguese version of Dementia Attitudes Scale (DAS) to assess caregivers' attitudes in two specific domains: "social comfort" and "knowledge" (each one scoring from 10 to 70). DAS global score ranges from 20 to 140 (higher scores indicate more positive attitudes). Descriptive statistics, parametric (One-way ANOVA and Independent T-Test) and non-parametric tests (Man-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis) were used for data analysis. The level of confidence considered was 0.05.

Results: Main findings suggest that formal caregivers tend to present positive attitudes (111.70 ± 10.83), as they feel comfortable with people with dementia (56.09 ± 6.33) and consider to have knowledge about this neurological condition (55.31 ± 6.74).

It was also observed that caregivers who had undertaken specific training on dementia scored higher on the "social comfort" domain than those without training. No significant statistical differences were found between DAS scores (global, social comfort or knowledge) and caregivers' age, education level, work time and subjective health.

Conclusion: The association between specialised training and positive attitudes towards people with dementia highlights the need of long-term care settings to invest on staff training and education. Training is fundamental to improve a more person-centred approach to the care of people with dementia, as this is increasingly being seen as synonymous of best quality of care.

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